

## **Pedestrian Master Plan Advisory Group (PMPAG) Meeting #16**

Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue

Room 4050/4060

October 24, 2008 8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

### **Meeting Summary**

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#### **Attendance**

Suzanne Anderson, James Bush, Rebecca Deehr, Celeste Gilman, Brian Johnston, Rob Kaufman, Bea Kumasaka, Mark Landreneau, Michael McGinn, Paulo Nunes-Ueno, Chas Redmond, Jim Schultz, Amy Shumann, Betty Lou Valentine

*Staff and Guests:* Kadie Bell, Charlie Bookman, Bill Bryant, Tracy Burrows, Shane DeWald, Dan Goodman (Toole Design Group), Tracy Krawczyk, Amalia Leighton (SvR Design), Brooke Magnusson, Carol McMahan, Allison Phillips (SvR Design), Peg Staeheli (SvR Design), Jennifer Wieland

The meeting was facilitated by Co-Chairs Rebecca Deehr and Paulo Nunes-Ueno.

#### **PMPAG Issues, Opportunities, and Concerns**

Chas Redmond noted that he participated in an accessibility training workshop with approximately 20 SDOT staff members on October 21. He was excited to see so many staff participating and felt that it was a great opportunity to do the workshop a second time with City personnel. Jennifer Wieland mentioned that a total of three workshops were scheduled, each with 20 people registered to attend. Chas noted one experience in particular: the attempt to cross 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Mercer Street wearing black-out glasses and using a cane. Not a single participant in the workshop was able to cross before the light changed, and most barely made it halfway across the street.

Jim Schultz requested an update from the last two PMPAG Steering Committee meetings, and Paulo, Becca, and Peg Staeheli provided an overview of the discussions with Liz Ellis (SDOT Sidewalk Maintenance) and Mary Rutherford (SDOT Street Use). Peg reported that Liz gave the Steering Committee an overview of the sidewalk maintenance program, including priorities and budget. Liz is continually testing new approaches to sidewalk repair, especially when it comes to dealing with street trees. Jim expressed his concern that the City should hold property owners responsible for sidewalk maintenance and asked about the education piece SDOT is creating to notify property owners of their obligations. Jennifer noted that the piece is in active development and a time for PMPAG review will be determined.

Celeste Gilman shared her feeling that the City should pay for all mobility infrastructure, including sidewalk repairs. Michael McGinn added his feeling that individual property owners will pay for sidewalks if there is a system of sharing costs. There was additional discussion about the possibility of using local improvement districts (or a similar approach to working with adjacent property owners) to fund sidewalk repairs.

Paulo and Becca shared highlights of the discussion with Mary Rutherford, which focused on permitting construction closures and the results of the construction zone audit recently completed by the City Auditor. The Steering Committee developed a series of recommendations regarding

sidewalk closures, including: examine permit fees and revise to make them comparable to the cost of building a covered walkway; implement results of the audit (e.g., meeting ADA standards; dedicating an inspector to sidewalk closures; announcing closures online); include pedestrians in the required traffic control plan for a permit; create an incentive for developers to provide safe passage (similar to the system used by DPD for plan review), and incorporate information about alternate types of walkways into the toolbox. Chas noted that he felt that SDOT understood and was addressing issues of enforcement and inspection.

Rob Kaufman recommended that a summary of the Steering Committee meetings be provided at the beginning of each PMPAG meeting, and Becca and Paulo agreed to do this at future meetings.

Becca reminded the group that a City Council budget hearing, including discussion of funding for sidewalk maintenance, was scheduled for October 27 and encouraged members of the PMPAG to attend.

### **Staff Report**

Jennifer distributed a hard copy of the SDOT staff report that covered updates on several topics including: infrastructure improvements throughout the city, passage of the sidewalk café ordinance, international walk to school month, and unveiling of the city's new "speed van." Jennifer also provided a summary of recent staff activities, such as presentations, inter-departmental meetings, and SDOT accessibility training workshops. The full staff report will be posted on the PMPAG website at: [www.seattle.gov/transportation/pm\\_agendas.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/pm_agendas.htm). Jennifer added that the issue papers produced by the consultant team have also been posted on the PMPAG website at: [http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/pm\\_pmpag.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/pm_pmpag.htm).

### **Elements of a Walkable System**

Amalia Leighton (SvR Design) and Dan Goodman (Toole Design Group) presented an overview of the elements of a walkable system, guided by the memo that was distributed to PMPAG members prior to the meeting. (The presentation will be posted to the PMPAG website, attached to the minutes, at: [www.seattle.gov/transportation/pm\\_agendas.htm](http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/pm_agendas.htm).) Dan explained that the elements are a way to identify the characteristics that tie together the pedestrian system, focusing first on the users of the system and then on existing and needed infrastructure. Eventually, the analysis will look at the overlap of all the components.

It was suggested that parks should be captured as an important generator, recognizing that some are major generators of pedestrian traffic and others are more moderate generators. Jim asked how walking for recreation fits into the system plan, noting that walking around a neighborhood for recreational purposes is, in many ways, as important as walking to destinations. Amalia explained that the first look at the system plan focuses on destinations and pedestrian generators, addressing walking for transportation in the initial phase of the analysis. Later stages of analysis will account for recreational walking.

Returning to the discussion of generators, the group looked specifically at the categories of high, medium, and low pedestrian generators, clarifying that the generators are focused on pedestrian demand (and not on existing infrastructure around a generator). Dan reminded the group that pedestrian potential is a measure of demand, based on anticipated levels of pedestrian activity. Becca recommended adding churches as a medium generator, noting that many offer a large number



of social services. Jim suggested additional generators for the list, such as banks and entertainment centers.

Michael commented that he felt a high degree of confidence that these are the right generators (and land use factors) to consider, adding that the consultants are clearly working from established research and data that will strengthen the analysis.

Dan explained that the next piece of work will be to establish appropriate demand radii around particular destinations to figure out the high impact locations. Michael suggested that this is similar to the work that WalkScore has done, but Celeste noted that WalkScore does not include existing infrastructure. Dan agreed, adding that the final analysis will focus both on pedestrian demand and need for infrastructure improvements.

The group also identified a number of gaps inherent in the grounding frameworks, such as limits to using urban villages as a marker of high demand and the need to reexamine the urban village transit network. Chas pointed out that the urban villages do not include pieces of the city that have seen significant growth in recent years, and Celeste added that current land use is a better measure of activity than urban villages. Michael agreed that the analysis should not rely on urban village boundaries and suggested that additional data might include topography and recognition of informal walking routes that people are currently using, especially in areas without sidewalks.

Amalia noted that the current focus is on citywide data sources, meaning that some pieces of information (e.g., informal walking routes) are not included. The analysis will first employ data sets available for the entire city and then begin to look at community needs as the project list is developed. Michael suggested that Neighborhood Street Fund projects, which are community-driven, tend to reflect where people are walking and could be used as a proxy for informal routes. Chas added that traffic circles could be used as an indicator of where people walk, as traffic calming might encourage more walking. The group agreed that, while these might be useful datasets, they are not necessarily a source of equitable data, as communities traditionally served by these programs may not be equitably distributed.

Betty Lou Valentine noted that for her and other seniors, safety is the primary concern, both in terms of infrastructure (e.g., trip/fall hazards) and in terms of personal safety.

Rob stressed the importance of overlaying pedestrian crashes, including injury severity, as a measure of safety. He noted that tying crashes to speed limits could be a useful tool in lobbying for speed limit reductions. Rob also asked about the availability of data from pedestrian counts, and Amalia mentioned that this will be used as supplemental data due to the fact that there are only certain locations within the city where counts have been done.

James Bush noted that I-5 is a huge barrier for pedestrians, with a limited number of places available to cross the interstate. He suggested that such crossings should be a high priority for improvements and that additional points of passage should be examined. Amalia noted that these "funnel points," which include underpasses, stairways, and bridges, will be important in project prioritization. The consultant team is considering the best ways to factor these points into the analysis.

Bea Kumasaka commented that while downtown may be considered walkable due to existing infrastructure, there are significant barriers to comfort and safety. For example, the walk from Pike Place Market to the Olympic Sculpture Park is difficult due to large numbers of trucks and limited signals on Western Avenue as well as the pedestrian traffic generated by certain “choke points,” such as the high volumes of traffic generated by ferries. Bea added that it is public safety that is a key issue for people, particularly in areas such as Belltown.

Rob suggested that it might be useful to look at crime statistics as a proxy for personal safety, and Jim noted that the issue seems to be the perception of safety. Bea commented that in addition to perception, there are events (e.g., shootings) that take place on a regular basis as well.

Suzanne Anderson noted that in the Northgate area, bus stops, parks, and community centers are the biggest pedestrian generators. She added that Northgate used to be an area that was very focused on automobile passage, but she now sees more people walking with the new development that is underway. However, it is important to work with property owners (including the mall owners) to improve pedestrian safety on private property. Suzanne also wondered if there was previously a law for providing safe pedestrian passage around work zones, noting that such safe passage should be a rule. She suggested requiring a recording or some other warning to alert pedestrians at the beginning of a block if there is a construction closure later in a block.

Brian Johnston commented that he likes the proposed methodology because it focuses on where people should be walking by looking at generators and attractors and allows staff to identify areas for future pedestrian counts, based on expected demand. He added that walking for recreation is important, but it will be difficult to map, particularly because it is difficult to know who is walking for recreation (and where they prefer to walk).

Mark Landreneau echoed the earlier comments about safety, mentioning that this is a key issue for people with disabilities. He also stressed the importance of looking at current infrastructure to evaluate locations with inadequate crossing time, uneven pathways, and areas with low light. Betty Lou suggested the need to look at the infrastructure in areas around public housing, as public housing caters to a population that relies heavily on walking for transportation and includes many seniors.

Becca noted that sidewalk width needs differ by roadway width and other factors. She wondered about the appropriate way to measure these varying needs.

Celeste commented that safety and security should be added to the analysis. She suggested using crime statistics, missing lights, and vacant buildings as a proxy for areas that might contribute to people’s perception that an area is unsafe. Celeste also commented on the need to capture the value of an engaging and pleasant streetscape and reiterated the need to prioritize funnel points (e.g., crossings of I-5). She recommended that trails be listed as a separate type of generator and cautioned against using raw Census numbers in the analysis.

### **Schedule for Plan Completion**

Jennifer highlighted the schedule for upcoming PMPAG meetings, as follows:

- November 21, 2008: Preliminary results of analysis and draft criteria for prioritization
- January 23, 2009: Plan recommendations workshop
- February 27, 2009: Review draft plan



**General Comments**

Chas asked about the timing of the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors survey, and Jennifer explained that a draft of the Request for Proposals is in review by City staff. The goal is to have a consultant under contract by the beginning of December and to spend the month of December and the early part of January developing the survey questions, with the involvement of interested PMPAG members. The survey is expected to launch toward the end of January 2009, and preliminary analysis will be completed by the end of March 2009.

Jim requested pedestrian crash data for the first six months of 2008, and Jennifer will follow up with that information. Jim also noted that heavy bicycle traffic on sidewalks poses a threat to pedestrians, especially downtown.

Chas announced that the West Seattle trails kiosks have been funded. He also noted that work has begun to identify walking routes in the northeast part of the city, with the National Parks Service providing one year of technical support for this effort.

**PMPAG Reminders**

Becca and Paulo adjourned the meeting, and reminded the group of that the next two PMPAG Steering Committee meetings are November 3 and November 17 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. in the Boards and Commissions Room of City Hall.

**Next Meeting**

Jennifer noted that the next PMPAG meeting is a week earlier than normal, due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

*Date and Time:* November 21, 2008; 8:00-10:00 a.m.

*Location:* Seattle Municipal Tower, Room 4050/60